

1 **TEXAS WORKFORCE COMMISSION**
2 **Adult Education and Literacy Letter**

ID/No:	AEL 03-22
Date:	September 28, 2022
Keyword:	AEL
Effective:	Immediately

3 **To:** Adult Education and Literacy Grant Recipients
4 Adult Education and Literacy Special Initiative Grantees
5 Local Workforce Development Board Executive Directors
6 Commission Executive Offices
7 Integrated Service Area Managers

8 

9 **From:** Courtney Arbour, Director, Workforce Development Division

10 **Subject:** **High School Equivalency Subsidy Program for Fiscal Year 2023 and AEL**
11 **Program Year 2022–2023**

12

13 **PURPOSE:**

14 The purpose of this AEL Letter is to provide Adult Education and Literacy (AEL) grant
15 recipients¹ with information and guidance on implementing the high school equivalency
16 (HSE) subsidy program during Fiscal Year 2023, which begins September 1, 2022, and AEL
17 Program Year 2022–2023.

18 **RESCISSIONS:**

19 AEL Letter 06-21

20 **BACKGROUND:**

21 Texas Education Code §48.302, Subsidy for High School Equivalency Examination for
22 Certain Individuals, requires the Texas Education Agency (TEA) to enter into a
23 memorandum of understanding with the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) when
24 transferring funds to provide a subsidy for the cost of an HSE exam for individuals who are
25 21 years of age or older. TWC has adopted rules addressing program implementation and
26 eligibility requirements for this program at TWC Chapter 805 Adult Education and Literacy
27 rules, Subchapter E, High School Equivalency Subsidy Program.

28 Currently, the publisher of the GED exam, GED Testing Service, LLC, is the only HSE exam
29 vendor approved by the State Board of Education to operate in Texas. Test-takers who pass
30 this exam are issued a State of Texas Certificate of High School Equivalency (TxCHSE).

¹ For the purposes of this AEL Letter, AEL grant recipients are entities that receive AEL funds through the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC).

1 Each GED exam, or the complete battery of the exam, comprises four individual tests, which
2 correspond to the subject areas of mathematics, science, social studies, and language arts.

3 On November 1, 2021, TEA and TWC entered into an interagency contract, which states that
4 TEA may transfer up to \$750,000 for each fiscal year of the 2021–2023 biennium for the
5 HSE subsidy program.

6 **PROCEDURES:**

7 **No Local Flexibility (NLF)**: This rating indicates that AEL entities must comply with the
8 federal and state laws, rules, policies, and required procedures set forth in this AEL Letter
9 and have no local flexibility in determining whether and/or how to comply. All information
10 with an NLF rating is indicated by “must” or “shall.”

11 **Local Flexibility (LF)**: This rating indicates that AEL entities have local flexibility in
12 determining whether and/or how to implement guidance or recommended practices set forth
13 in this AEL Letter. All information with an LF rating is indicated by “may” or “recommend.”

14 **Definitions**

15 **NLF**: AEL grant recipients must be aware of the following definitions, which relate to the HSE
16 subsidy voucher program.

17 **HSE voucher tracker** is the Microsoft Excel reporting tool that grant recipients use to track
18 HSE vouchers released by TWC AEL to the grant recipient for subsidy recipients. This tool
19 serves the following two purposes:

- 20 • It is TWC’s mechanism to send voucher codes to AEL grant recipients.
- 21 • It provides grant recipients with a way to track voucher usage by student name, Texas
22 Educating Adults Management System (TEAMS) participant ID, and HSE voucher
23 information in order to reconcile voucher usage data against TEAMS and GED
24 Manager™. The terms “online proctored,” “computer-based regular,” and “computer-
25 based retake” are used to describe the different types of vouchers available for each GED
26 test.

27 **Subsidy** is an amount not to exceed the cost of one GED exam, inclusive of all subject areas
28 or the complete battery, as negotiated by TEA with GED Testing Service, LLC. The GED
29 exam contains four tests, and individual tests correspond to the subject areas of mathematics,
30 science, social studies, and language arts. The test fees per battery and per subject area for
31 the GED exam are on the [TEA website](#).

32 **Subsidy recipient** is an individual who is determined to be eligible to receive an HSE
33 subsidy. An individual is eligible if he or she:

- 34 • is a Texas resident;
- 35 • is 21 years of age or older at the time that a voucher for the subsidy is issued;
- 36 • lacks a high school diploma or its equivalent; and
- 37 • is determined to be HSE test-ready.

38 A subsidy recipient may be:

- 39 • a current AEL participant;
- 40 • a former AEL participant within 365 days of exit; or

- a non-AEL participant who is otherwise eligible to receive the subsidy.

Voucher is an electronic voucher code provided to an eligible individual for taking a GED test. GED Testing Service, LLC, is the only approved vendor of the HSE exam in Texas for the purpose of TxCHSE attainment. The amounts for vouchers may vary due to the cost differences in test administration methods, such as online-proctored or computer-based.

Initial Voucher Distribution to AEL Grant Recipients

NLF: AEL grant recipients must be aware that the initial number of vouchers that are available to the grant recipient is approved by TWC’s three-member Commission (Commission) by September 1 of each year. AEL staff will notify AEL grant recipients of the initial number of vouchers available to each grant recipient and request that the AEL grant recipients indicate the type of vouchers needed for the GED exam, as follows:

- The number of regular or retake online-proctored test vouchers (\$42.25 each)
- The number of regular computer-based test vouchers (\$36.25 each)
- The number of retake and computer-based test vouchers (\$16.25 each)

The voucher request may not exceed the initial distribution voucher amounts approved by the Commission.

AEL staff will send the requested GED voucher codes to the AEL director in the HSE voucher tracker.

HSE Subsidy Program Implementation

NLF: AEL grant recipients must be aware that they are responsible for the management and local implementation of the HSE subsidy program by following the rules in Subchapter E.

NLF: AEL grant recipients must be aware that HSE vouchers may be used only to pay for individual GED tests, including the regular and retake options for online-proctored and computer-based tests. Test administration options and fees are negotiated between TEA and GED Testing Service, LLC, and are available on the [TEA TxCHSE web page](#).

NLF: AEL grant recipients must be aware that neither an HSE subsidy nor the total value of vouchers given to a subsidy recipient may exceed the cost of a GED exam. The cost of a full battery of the GED exam is currently \$145 for the computer-based option and \$169 for the online-proctored option.

NLF: AEL grant recipients must be aware that the Commission may redistribute—either midyear or at a time deemed appropriate by staff—the number of HSE vouchers initially approved to that grant recipient based on the use and demand of HSE vouchers in the grant recipient’s service delivery area.

NLF: AEL grant recipients must be aware that HSE vouchers must not be used to pay for a test-readiness assessment, such as the GED Ready Test.

Requesting Additional Vouchers

LF: AEL grant recipients may request additional vouchers once they have used 70 percent of the initial voucher allotment for a voucher type (online-proctored, computer-based regular, or computer-based retake).

1 **NLF:** AEL grant recipients must submit a written request for the additional vouchers to
2 TWC.TXCHSE@twc.texas.gov with the following information:
3 • The additional number of vouchers requested and a usage plan for the requested vouchers
4 • Confirmation that the grant recipient has used at least 70 percent of the initial vouchers
5 allotted (for a voucher type)
6 • Assurance that the grant recipient is accurately tracking voucher usage by providing a
7 completed HSE voucher tracking tool and confirming that it has been reconciled against
8 GED Manager™ and TEAMS

9 **NLF:** AEL grant recipients must be aware that TWC AEL will review the grant recipient’s request
10 and may require additional data before releasing additional vouchers. Grant recipients must
11 be aware that AEL staff may deny requests for additional vouchers.

12 **Subsidy Recipient Eligibility**

13 **NLF:** AEL grant recipients must be aware that, at the time a voucher is issued, subsidy recipients
14 must:
15 • be 21 years of age or older;
16 • lack a high school diploma or its equivalent;
17 • be a Texas resident; and
18 • be determined HSE test-ready.

19 **NLF:** AEL grant recipients must be aware that the distribution of HSE vouchers to ineligible
20 individuals may result in disallowed costs.

21 **NLF:** AEL grant recipients must prioritize the distribution of HSE vouchers to current AEL
22 participants and to former AEL participants within 365 days of exit. AEL participants include
23 those enrolled in state leadership-funded initiatives, such as Accelerate Texas and Ability-to-
24 Benefit.

25 **NLF:** AEL grant recipients must have a process to distribute the HSE subsidy to eligible non-AEL
26 participants, which must include collection of the minimum information needed to create a
27 student record in TEAMS.

28 **LF:** AEL grant recipients may refer non-AEL participants seeking HSE vouchers to the AEL
29 program.

30 **Test-Readiness Eligibility**

31 **NLF:** Before distributing a voucher to a subsidy recipient, AEL grant recipients must ensure that
32 the subsidy recipient is HSE test-ready by using an assessment tool. The subsidy recipient’s
33 instructor or assigned AEL program staff member will:
34 • determine whether the subsidy recipient is test-ready based on an assessment tool score;
35 and
36 • for retake tests, confirm that the subsidy recipient is eligible to take the GED test
37 according to the vendor’s retest policies.

38 If a subsidy recipient is test-ready, the instructor or staff member will recommend to the AEL
39 director that the individual receive an HSE voucher.

1 **LF:** AEL grant recipients may use an assessment tool suitable for determining a subsidy
2 recipient's readiness to take an HSE test, such as the GED Ready practice test, or other
3 assessments. Such assessments are not required to be approved by the National Reporting
4 System, as outlined in the Texas Adult Education and Literacy Testing Guide. Grant
5 recipients should consider any test-readiness scores that may be required by GED Testing
6 Service, LLC, for online-proctored tests.

7 **Photo ID and Texas Residency**

8 **NLF:** Before distributing a voucher to a subsidy recipient, AEL grant recipients must verify that the
9 subsidy recipient has a government-issued photo ID and proof of residency, following [TEA's](#)
10 [HSE test-taker requirements](#). Expired photo IDs are not accepted. If an individual does not
11 have the required documentation for taking an HSE exam as determined by TEA, then that
12 individual is not eligible to receive an HSE voucher.

13 **Local Distribution of Vouchers**

14 **NLF:** AEL grant recipients must enter all subsidy recipients, including non-AEL participants, into
15 TEAMS to create a unique TEAMS ID. Current and former AEL participants will already
16 have an assigned TEAMS ID, which must be used for HSE voucher tracking purposes and
17 for registering the student for the GED test.

18 **Subsidy Recipient Acknowledgment**

19 **NLF:** AEL grant recipients must develop a form for each subsidy recipient to sign and
20 acknowledge what the subsidy recipient must do in order to participate in the HSE subsidy
21 program. At a minimum, the form must state that the subsidy recipient agrees to:

- 22 • use the voucher only for himself or herself;
- 23 • notify the AEL grant recipient if he or she is receiving vouchers from other programs;
- 24 • enter the TEAMS ID into his or her GED account; and
- 25 • give the AEL grant recipient permission to view testing information.

26 **Release of Voucher**

27 **NLF:** AEL grant recipients must be aware that the AEL director or director-designated staff
28 member is the only AEL program staff member authorized to approve the distribution of a
29 voucher to a subsidy recipient. At a minimum, the director or designated staff member must
30 confirm the following elements before approving the release of a voucher to a subsidy
31 recipient:

- 32 • The subsidy recipient is eligible.
- 33 • The subsidy recipient's ability to take the test is in accordance with the retest policies of
34 GED Testing Service, LLC.
- 35 • The subsidy recipient has not been given vouchers exceeding the value of a subsidy either
36 from the same AEL program or another AEL program, including in previous program
37 years.
- 38 • The subsidy recipient has a GED account **and has included his or her TEAMS ID**
39 **number on the account.**

40 Upon approving the release of a voucher to a subsidy recipient, the AEL director or
41 designated staff member must enter the subsidy recipient's:

- 42 • assigned GED voucher code on the Support Services page in TEAMS; and

- 1 • assigned TEAMS ID and the GED voucher code given to the subsidy recipient in the
2 HSE voucher tracker.

3 **LF:** AEL grant recipients may reference the Support Services page in TEAMS to assess how
4 many vouchers have been redeemed by the subsidy recipient and to determine whether the
5 subsidy recipient has redeemed a number of vouchers whose value exceeds the allowed
6 subsidy amount.

7 **LF:** AEL grant recipients may distribute more than one voucher to a subsidy recipient at a time if
8 the subsidy recipient is deemed test-ready.

9 **Test Registration**

10 **NLF:** Once a subsidy recipient is approved to receive a voucher, the subsidy recipient's AEL
11 instructor or other assigned staff member must help the subsidy recipient register for the HSE
12 test online to ensure that:

- 13 • the test is scheduled **within 30 days** based on the availability of test dates; and
- 14 • the unique TEAMS ID is entered into the appropriate field when registering for the test.

15 **Redeemed GED Vouchers**

16 **NLF:** AEL grant recipients must be aware that once the subsidy recipient takes the scheduled test,
17 the voucher that was used to register for the test is considered redeemed and is counted
18 toward the subsidy recipient's use of the HSE subsidy. If a subsidy recipient is a no-show for
19 a scheduled test, then the voucher code is also considered redeemed and will count toward
20 the subsidy amount. However, if the scheduled test is canceled according to GED's
21 cancellation policy and is not charged, then the voucher is not redeemed.

22 **NLF:** AEL grant recipients must be aware that GED vouchers must be redeemed by June 30, 2023.
23 This means that all GED tests that were purchased with a voucher must be taken by June 30,
24 2023.

25 **NLF:** AEL grant recipients must be aware of previous vouchers redeemed by a subsidy recipient to
26 ensure that the amount of subsidy given to that subsidy recipient does not exceed the cost of
27 an exam.

28 **LF:** AEL grant recipients may partner with state leadership-funded AEL program partners, such
29 as Accelerate Texas and Ability-to-Benefit, to distribute vouchers to AEL participants in
30 those programs.

31 **Tracking Voucher Use Locally**

32 **NLF:** AEL grant recipients that are distributing vouchers for GED tests must obtain access to the
33 GED Manager™ by emailing the GED Manager™ point of contact. This will enable grant
34 recipients to view all scheduled tests for subsidy recipients taking GED tests paid for with an
35 HSE voucher, as well as the status of tests taken using the voucher.

36 **TEAMS Entry of Vouchers**

37 AEL grant recipients must be aware that a Program Year 2022–2023 TEAMS release
38 requires grant recipients to enter the following voucher information in a participant's record
39 on the Support Services Details page:

- 40 • HSE Voucher code

- 1 • Test type
- 2 • Test subject
- 3 • Test format
- 4 • Voucher amount

5 AEL grant recipients must enter all required voucher information in TEAMS for both
 6 participants and non-AEL students, as shown in Image 1, upon release of this TEAMS
 7 enhancement.

8 **Image 1: Support Service Details for HSE Vouchers**

Support Service Details
 Participant Name: Acosta, Alicia
 Grant Recipient: 501 - Abilene ISD

Start Date:*

Support Service Type: HSE Voucher

HSE Voucher Code	Test Type	Test Subject	Test Format	Voucher Amount
HSE Voucher Code1:*	Choose	Choose	Choose	
HSE Voucher Code2:	Choose	Choose	Choose	
HSE Voucher Code3:	Choose	Choose	Choose	
HSE Voucher Code4:	Choose	Choose	Choose	
HSE Voucher Code5:	Choose	Choose	Choose	

Non-US Degree Country: Choose

Transportation Amount:

Comments:

Save Cancel

- 9
- 10 **NLF:** AEL grant recipients must be aware of the following process for receiving and tracking
 11 voucher codes:
- 12 1. The AEL director or designated staff member must email TWC AEL staff at
 13 TWC.TXCHSE@twc.texas.gov to request the types of GED vouchers—online-proctored,
 14 regular computer-based, and/or retake computer-based.
 - 15 2. TWC AEL staff sends the AEL director a set of voucher codes for the requested voucher
 16 types via the HSE voucher tracker.
 - 17 3. Before releasing a voucher to a subsidy recipient, the AEL director or designated staff
 18 member must confirm that the subsidy recipient has:
 - 19 ➤ signed an HSE subsidy program acknowledgment form;
 - 20 ➤ created a GED account;
 - 21 ➤ entered the TEAMS ID into the GED account in the State Requested Information
 22 field; and
 - 23 ➤ given the AEL grant recipient permission to view test information in the GED
 24 account.

- 1 4. Upon approving the release of a voucher for a subsidy recipient, the AEL director or
2 designated staff member enters all subsidy recipient information required in the HSE
3 voucher tracker, including the unique TEAMS ID, the voucher number, and whether the
4 voucher is for an online-proctored test, a regular computer-based test, or a retake
5 computer-based test.
- 6 5. When a subsidy recipient is registering for a GED test online, the subsidy recipient must
7 enter the unique TEAMS ID and voucher code before completing the purchase
8 transaction for the test.
- 9 6. AEL grant recipients must enter all voucher numbers redeemed by subsidy recipients,
10 including non-AEL participants, in TEAMS on the Support Services page by the 15th of
11 each month, as outlined in the Texas Adult Education and Literacy Testing Guide. (Refer
12 to the TEAMS Entry NLF.)
- 13 7. At least biweekly, AEL grant recipients must reconcile redeemed vouchers and compare
14 the vouchers assigned for a GED test (as noted in the HSE tracker, TEAMS, and GED
15 Manager™) with the redeemed vouchers, indicating that the scheduled test was taken.
- 16 8. By the monthly data validation date, grant recipients must ensure that required data
17 entered into the TEAMS Support Services page is accurate for all redeemed vouchers and
18 verify whether subsidy recipients have redeemed a voucher by taking the GED test or
19 whether the released voucher was never redeemed (in other words, the test was canceled,
20 or the voucher was never used to schedule a test). Additionally, AEL grant recipients
21 must verify that the total value of vouchers granted to a subsidy recipient has not
22 exceeded the cost of the HSE exam.

23 **Standard Operating Procedures**

24 **NLF:** AEL grant recipients must develop a standard operating procedure for implementing the HSE
25 subsidy program that addresses, at a minimum, the following elements:

- 26 • Eligibility determination of subsidy recipients that includes test-readiness
- 27 • The process for distributing vouchers to current, former, and non-AEL participants,
28 including referral of non-AEL participants to AEL
- 29 • The process for tracking vouchers offered to state leadership-funded AEL program
30 partners such as Accelerate Texas and Ability-to-Benefit and for distributing vouchers to
31 AEL participants in those programs
- 32 • Tracking voucher usage using the TWC-issued HSE voucher tracker and TEAMS
- 33 • Verification and reconciliation of voucher usage
- 34 • Tracking performance through GED Manager™ and notifying TWC if an earned
35 credential is not showing in data match
- 36 • When requested by TWC AEL staff, an accurate list of redeemed vouchers via the HSE
37 voucher tracker

38 **Technical Assistance**

39 **LF:** AEL grant recipients may email TWC.TXCHSE@twc.texas.gov for questions regarding the
40 HSE subsidy program. AEL grant recipients may also email the GED Manager™ point of
41 contact for any questions regarding GED Manager™ or issues with voucher codes.

42 **INQUIRIES:**

43 Send inquiries regarding this AEL Letter to aelpolicy.clarifications@twc.texas.gov.

1 **ATTACHMENTS:**

2 None

3 **REFERENCES:**

4 Texas Education Code §48.302

5 TWC Chapter 805 Adult Education and Literacy Rules, Subchapter E, High School
6 Equivalency Subsidy Program

7 Texas Adult Education and Literacy Testing Guide